

SS#2 SS SCS SB 2 -- EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

This bill makes several changes to the law concerning employment security. The bill:

- (1) Requires the Division of Employment Security to cross-check unemployment compensation recipients against the federal new hire database monthly;
- (2) Increases the taxable wage base to \$8,000 for calendar year 2003 and bases the taxable wage base on the previous year's balance in the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund. If the balance is \$350 million or less, the wage base will increase by \$1,000; if the balance is \$500 million or more, the wage base will decrease by \$500;
- (3) Freezes the maximum benefit amount for 24 months in the event of fund insolvency after the fund regains solvency;
- (4) Exempts unemployment insurance claimants from the seeking work requirement if they are participating in a state-approved drug or alcohol treatment program;
- (5) Makes the one-week waiting period non-compensable at any time;
- (6) Defines misconduct in connection with work as including acts of wanton or willful disregard of the employer's interest, deliberate violation of rules, disregard of standards of behavior, excessive negligence, wrongful intent, or evil design;
- (7) Requires that suspensions of four weeks be treated as discharges;
- (8) Requires that if an unemployment insurance claimant has been discharged due to misconduct in connection with work, the claimant be disqualified from the waiting week credit and benefits. Current law allows deputies to consider the seriousness of the misconduct in each case and disqualify claimants for not less than four and not more than 16 weeks;
- (9) Establishes criteria for an offer of suitable work;
- (10) Removes the exemption for salaries of elected officials, severance pay, and termination pay for purposes of calculating partial unemployment benefits;
- (11) Requires the division to recalculate the contribution rate of a newly acquired business on the first day of the next calendar quarter after acquisition instead of as of the date of

acquisition;

(12) Allows the state to issue bonds to fund unemployment benefits through the newly created Missouri Commission on Employment Security Financing and to charge employers an additional fee to pay the expenses for these bonds;

(13) Allows the division to contract with private entities to provide employment and reemployment services; and

(14) Prohibits the disclosure of confidential information related to employment security. Unlawful disclosure is a class D felony.